

***Remarks***

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 1-59 are pending in the application, with 1, 11, 23, 32, and 45 being the independent claims. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested.

Based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Amendments made after final rejection that touch the merits of the application may be entered upon a showing of good and sufficient reasons why they are necessary and were not earlier presented. See 37 C.F.R. § 1.116. The foregoing amendments distinguish the claims over the art of record and place the claims in condition for allowance. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the amendments be entered.

***Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103***

Independent claims 1, 11, 23, 32, and 45, along with claims 2-6, 12-18, 24-27, 33-38, and 46-51 which depend therefrom, have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,085,853 to Wernick in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,364,041 to Vangsgard. The Examiner states that Wernick discloses all of the features of these claims except a prime mover disposed between two nonsteerable axles. The Examiner then states that Vangsgard teaches a prime mover disposed between two

nonsteerable axles and it would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to combine the two teachings to disclose all the features of these claims.

The foregoing amendment to claims 1 and 32 recites that power is transmitted *directly* to said first transmission member and through said power dividing means to said second transmission member. The Wernick patent teaches power being first transmitted through power dividing means 42, then to first transmission member 11 and second transmission member 13. Additionally, the Vangsgard patent also does not disclose this feature. Accordingly, even if it were obvious to combine these references, the combination would not teach each and every feature of the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of these claims.

Claims 2-10 and 33-44 depend from and add additional features to claims 1 and 32 respectively. Therefore these claims are allowable for at least the reasons stated above. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection of these claims be withdrawn.

The foregoing amendment to claims 11, 23, and 45 recites that power is transmitted *directly* to one of said output members. The Wernick patent teaches power being first transmitted through power dividing means 42. Additionally, the Vangsgard patent does not teach power being transmitted directly to an output member. Accordingly, even if it were obvious to combine these references, the combination would not teach each and every feature of the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of these claims.

Claims 12-22, 24-31, and 46-59 depend from and add additional features to claims 11, 23 and 45 respectively. Therefore these claims are allowable for at least the reasons stated above. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection of these claims be withdrawn.

Claims 7-10, 19-22, 28-31, 41-44 and 54-57, regarding the braking system, have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wernick, in view of Vangsgard, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,462,271 to Steig. The Examiner states that Wernick in view of Vangsgard discloses all of the features of the present invention except a braking system. The Examiner then states that Steig teaches a braking system essentially as claimed and it would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to combine these three teaching to disclose all the features of these claims.

Applicant respectfully transverses the Examiner's rejection of these claims because Steig does not disclose, for example, a brake provided on an axle, as recited in dependent claims 7, 19, and 28. Additionally, Steig does not disclose the brake provided on an axle which is divided into two halves, as recited in claims 10, 22, 31, 44, and 57.

Additionally, the Steig patent does not disclose the features of the foregoing amendments to independent claims 1, 11, 23, 32, and 45, as discussed above. Accordingly, even if it were obvious to combine Wernick, Vangsgard and Steig, the resulting combination would not teach the present invention. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection of these claims also be withdrawn.

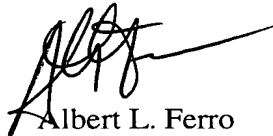
*Conclusion*

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicant believes that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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**Version with markings to show changes made**

Marked-up version of claim 1:

1. (Once Amended) A multi-wheel-driving vehicle, comprising:

three or more axles arranged in parallel along a longitudinal axis of said vehicle, each of said axles provided on both ends thereof with respective drive wheels, wherein one of said three or more axles is a steering axle provided with steerable drive wheels;

first and second transmission members, wherein said steering axle synchronously interlocks with said second transmission member, and wherein at least one of the other axles synchronously interlocks with said first transmission member;

power dividing means interposed between said first and second transmission members, wherein power is transmitted directly to said first transmission member and through said power dividing means [between said first and] to said second transmission member[s] while said power dividing means permits a difference of rotary speed between said first and second transmission members; and

a prime mover disposed between two of said three or more axles, wherein neither of said two axles is the steering axle.

Marked-up version of claim 11:

11. (Once Amended) A multi-wheel-driving vehicle, comprising:

three or more axles arranged in parallel along a longitudinal axis of said vehicle, each of said axles provided on both ends thereof with respective drive wheels, wherein one of said three or more axles is a steering axle provided with steerable drive wheels;

power dividing means including an input member and a pair of output members, wherein power is transmitted directly to one of said output members and said power dividing means differentially shares[ing] power transmitted into said input member between said pair of output members, wherein each of said input member and said pair of output members synchronously interlocks with at least one of said three or more axles; and

a prime mover disposed between two of said three or more axles, wherein neither of said two axles is the steering axle.

Marked-up version of claim 23:

23. (Once Amended) A multi-wheel-driving vehicle, comprising:

three or more axles arranged in parallel along a longitudinal axis of said vehicle, each of said axles provided on both ends thereof with respective drive wheels, wherein one of said three or more axles is a steering axle provided with steerable drive wheels;

power dividing means including an input member and a pair of output members, wherein power is transmitted directly to one of said output members and said power dividing means differentially shares[ing] power transmitted into said input member between said pair of output members, wherein each of said three or more axles synchronously interlocks with either of said output members so that each of said output members synchronously interlocks with at least one of said axles; and

a prime mover disposed between two of said three or more axles, wherein neither of said two axles is the steering axle.

Marked-up version of claim 32:

32. (Once Amended) A multi-wheel-driving vehicle, comprising:

a prime mover;

three or more transaxle devices disposed in tandem along a longitudinal axis of said vehicle, wherein each of said transaxle devices includes input means and an axle serving as output means, said axle being provided on both ends thereof with respective drive wheels, wherein one of said three or more transaxle devices is a main transaxle device whose input means receives power from said prime mover prior to the other transaxle devices, and wherein one of said three or more transaxle devices is a steering transaxle device whose axle is provided with steerable drive wheels;

first and second transmission members, wherein power of said prime mover is taken out from said main transaxle device to said first transmission member, and wherein said second transmission member synchronously interlocks with at least one of said input means of all the other transaxle devices other than said main transaxle device;

power dividing means interposed between said pair of transmission members, wherein said power is transmitted directly to said first transmission member and through said power dividing means from said first transmission member to said second transmission member while said power dividing means permits a difference of rotary speed between said first and second transmission members; and

wherein said prime mover is disposed between two of said three or more axles, and neither of said two axles is the steering axle.

Marked-up version of claim 45:

45. (Once Amended) A multi-wheel-driving vehicle, comprising:

a prime mover;

three or more transaxle devices disposed in tandem along a longitudinal axis of said vehicle, wherein each of said transaxle devices includes input means and an axle serving as output means, said axle being provided on both ends thereof with respective drive wheels, wherein one of said three or more transaxle devices is a main transaxle device whose input means receives power from said prime mover prior to the other transaxle devices, and wherein one of said three or more transaxle devices is a steering transaxle device whose axle is provided with steerable drive wheels;

power dividing means including an input member and a pair of output members, wherein power is transmitted directly to one of said output members and said power dividing means differentially shares[ing] power transmitted into said input member between said pair of output members, wherein each of said input member and said pair of output members synchronously interlocks with at least one of said axle of said main transaxle device and said input means of the other transaxle devices other than said main transaxle device; and

wherein said prime mover is disposed between two of said three or more axles, neither of said two axles is the steering axle.